



Schools plan for potential of remote learning into the fall

By CAROLYN THOMPSON
Associated Press

Parents of schoolchildren learning from home shouldn't necessarily count on reclaiming the dining room table any time soon. After seeing two academic years thrown off course by the pandemic, school leaders around the country are planning for the possibility of more distance learning next fall at the start of yet another school year.

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HOME ROOM

Students at Driggers Elementary School attend a class in-person as they interact with classmates virtually, Monday, Feb. 8, 2021, in San Antonio.

Associated Press



Sharing Menu \$50 per couple



2 appetizers



1 Main dish



1 Dessert

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Schools plan for potential of remote learning into the fall

Continued from Front

"We have no illusions that COVID will be eradicated by the time the start of the school year comes up," said William "Chip" Sudderth III, a spokesperson for Durham, North Carolina schools, whose students have been out of school buildings since March. President Joe Biden has made reopening schools a top priority, but administrators say there is much to consider as new strains of the coronavirus appear and teachers wait their turn for vaccinations.

And while many parents are demanding that schools fully reopen, others say they won't feel safe sending children back to classrooms until vaccines are available to even young students. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top public health expert, said late last month the Biden administration hopes to begin vaccinating children by late spring or early summer.

By then, districts will be deep into preparations for the next school year.

"As far as 2021-22, at least some part of that school year is likely still going to be pandemic response-related on the assumption that children won't have access to the vaccine, or at least many won't," said Superintendent Brian Woods, of Northside Independent School District, among the largest districts in Texas.

That could mean a more teacher-friendly version of the mix of in-person and remote learning happening now, one that doesn't require teachers to simultaneously instruct two groups. That could be accomplished either by splitting staffing or rearranging schedules, he said, adding



Superintendent Brian Woods, of Northside Independent School District, among the largest districts in Texas poses for a photo at his office, Monday, Feb. 8, 2021, in San Antonio.

longer term may see an all-remote option for students who have moved on permanently from traditional school.

"There's going to be some element of the genie not being able to be put back in the bottle," Woods said. "I think that there now will always be a group of families who want a virtual option. ... We know we're able to, but are we willing to do it?" Faced with the same reality, California's West Contra Costa Unified School District is planning a new K-12 Virtual Academy for 2021-22.

"One thing that we have learned during the pandemic is that teaching and learning is now different, and it will not fully be what we used to think was 'normal' ever again," read the January agenda item before the Board of Education.

The pivot to distance learning last March has proved a lifeline for the education system, but concerns have grown with each passing

month about the effects on racial inequities, students' academic performance, attendance and their overall well being.

In Durham, North Carolina, schools — which has been fully remote since March — announced last month that it would remain that way through the end of the current academic year.

Beyond that, Sudderth said, "the prevalence of the disease will determine what we are able to do."

The guideline for whether the 32,000-student district could move from remote to hybrid learning in January was a testing positivity rate below 4%. But it's unclear whether that metric or others that until now have been set by states or districts will hold.

Biden, in an early executive order, directed his education secretary to provide "evidence-based guidance" and advice to schools to safely conduct in-person learning.

"I'm hoping that we don't have to do hybrid, but I

don't want to be in a position where we haven't thought it all through," said Eva Moskowitz, whose 47 Success Academy Charter Schools enroll 20,000 students in New York City. Success students have been signing in for full days of live remote instruction on school-provided laptops and tablets since the beginning of the school year, an exhausting undertaking that Moskowitz plans to end for the current school year on May 28. The 2021-22 school year will then begin Aug. 2, possibly in a hybrid format.

"I honestly don't know what the chances are" of continuing remote learning into the next school year, she said.

"Logic would tell me that we shouldn't have to, but my knowledge of government makes me a little more hesitant," she said, noting the sometimes conflicting guidance from the city and state and the slow start to the rollout of vaccines.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has vowed that schools in the nation's largest school district are "going to be back full-strength in September."

"Everyone wants to be back," he's said.

But the head of the powerful teachers' union, Michael Mulgrew, says it's too soon to commit. Schools currently are providing some in-person classes to elementary and pre-K students who want them. A plan announced Monday by De Blasio will reopen middle school buildings Feb. 25 but there is no plan yet for high schools.

"It's a goal of mine, but I can't say they're going to open" the United Federation of Teachers president said in an interview. His view of the mayor's pledge: "This is not about what you want. This is about what you can do safely."

Chancellor Richard Carranza acknowledged that while the goal is in-person school, distance learning "is going to stay with us" past the pandemic.

"We're looking at this being a component," he said during a news conference Monday with de Blasio.

Mulgrew said it will take more than teacher vaccines to open schools fully and safely.

He noted that scientists aren't yet clear on whether vaccinated people might still be able to spread the virus, even if they aren't sickened themselves. And he wonders how comfortable families will feel about having unvaccinated children and young teens begin the new year unvaccinated.

"This is where it gets tough. So how do you say you're opening in September when we need to get these questions answered?" he asked. □

Associated Press

Budget office: \$15 wage would reduce poverty, increase debt

By KEVIN FREKING, ALAN FRAM and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour would reduce the number of Americans living in poverty and boost wages for millions of Americans while adding to the federal debt and joblessness, a new report from the Congressional Budget Office projects. The federal deficit would increase by about \$54 billion over 10 years under a Democratic proposal to gradually increase the federal minimum wage to \$15, largely because the higher wages paid to workers, such as those caring for the elderly, would contribute to an increase in federal spending, the estimate found.

Democrats are pushing to include the higher minimum wage as part of their \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief plan. House committees this week will begin crafting the legislation along the lines that President Joe Biden has requested, but it's unclear whether the minimum wage proposal will make it into the final product. The bill is expected to include another round of direct payments to Americans, an expansion of the child tax credit and aid to states and local governments.

The decision on the mini-



Associated Press

mum wage is a key early test for Biden as he seeks to build public support for his proposal and navigate differences within his own party about how far the COVID-19 legislation should go. Voices on the left like Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., the author of the wage legislation, want Democrats to fight now for the pay increase, but some moderates are wary, fearing the impact on small businesses during the pandemic.

The report from the Congressional Budget Office cites several positive and negative effects from raising the minimum wage. On the positive, the number

of people living in poverty would fall by about 900,000 once the \$15 wage is fully in place in 2025. On the negative, the number of people working would decline by about 1.4 million.

Rep. Bobby Scott, the Democratic chair of the House Education and Labor Committee, said the report strengthens the case for including the \$15 minimum wage in the COVID-19 relief bill. He emphasized that the report projected that 17 million workers making below the minimum wage would see a pay increase once the requirement is in place. An additional 10 million workers making slightly

more than the proposed minimum could also see a boost in pay.

"At a time when many of our essential workers are still not being paid enough to provide for themselves and their families, we must do everything in our power to give these workers a long-overdue raise," Scott said. But lawmakers worried about the ability of small businesses to pay the higher minimum wage will undoubtedly point to the job losses that CBO said would occur. Business groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said they can support efforts to increase the minimum wage but

cite \$15 as too high.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden remains "firmly committed" to a \$15 minimum wage. But Psaki also noted that the Senate parliamentarian has the final say on whether the minimum wage hike survives in the final package. The fast-track process that Democrats are using does not allow changes to spending or taxes that are "merely incidental" to a larger policy purpose.

The current federal minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour and has not changed since 2009. Most states also have minimum wage laws. Employees generally are entitled to the higher of the two minimum wages. Currently, 29 states and Washington, D.C., have minimum wages above the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.

Also Monday, Democratic lawmakers unveiled legislation to permanently expand the child tax credit, with backers saying that Democratic leadership has agreed to include their legislation for one year as part of the COVID-19 relief measure. Under the legislation, the value of the tax credit would become fully refundable and would be expanded from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for children ages 6 through 17, and from \$2,000 to \$3,600 for children below the age of 6. □

Alabama university removes Wallace name from building

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP)

— The University of Alabama at Birmingham has removed the name of four-term governor and presidential candidate George C. Wallace from a campus building over his support of racial segregation.

A resolution unanimously approved by trustees Friday said Wallace rose to power by defending racial separation and stoking racial animosity. While noting Wallace's eventual renunciation of racist policies, the resolution said his name remains a symbol of racial injustice for many.

A UAB building that was

named after Wallace in 1975 will now be called simply the Physical Education Building. Removing Wallace's name from the structure "is simply the right thing to do," trustee John England Jr. said in a statement. Wallace vowed "segregation forever" at his 1963 inaugural and was paralyzed in an assassination attempt while running for president in 1972. He has a "complex legacy" that includes his apology to the late Rep. John Lewis, who was beaten by Alabama state troopers while trying to march for voting rights in Selma, England said.

"That said, his stated regret late in life did not erase the effects of the divisiveness that continue to haunt the conscience and reputation of our state," he said.

Wallace was elected to his fourth term as governor in 1982 with support from Black voters and died in 1998. Multiple buildings around the state bear his name.

An online petition urged Auburn University to rename a building honoring Wallace last year as protests against police killings and racial injustice swept across the nation, but no action was taken. Wal-



In this June 11, 1963 file photo, Gov. George Wallace blocks the entrance to the University of Alabama as he turned back a federal officer attempting to enroll two black students at the university campus in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Associated Press

lace's son George Wallace Jr. wrote an open letter opposing such a move, which

he said would fail to recognize his change late in life. □

Utah police: Avalanche killed 4 local backcountry skiers

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Four backcountry skiers in their 20s died when one of the deadliest avalanches in Utah history hit a popular canyon, police said Sunday. Four other people also were buried in the Saturday slide but managed to dig themselves out and didn't suffer serious injuries, according to Unified Police of Salt Lake County.

The skiers were from two separate groups, and all eight had prepared with the necessary avalanche safety gear, authorities said. The four killed were all from the Salt Lake City area, not far the spot where they were swept up by the skier-triggered avalanche in Millcreek Canyon.

Intermountain Life Flight helicopter pilot Richard Dobson told the Salt Lake Tribune that one person was conducting CPR on another of the skiers when they arrived at the site of the avalanche.

"Our backcountry outdoor community is very connected so this type of loss



Salt Lake County Sheriff Search and Rescue crews respond to the top of Millcreek Canyon where four skiers died in an avalanche Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021, near Salt Lake City.

Associated Press

touches many people and really is heartbreaking," Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson said. "These are people who love doing what they did and lived life to the fullest."

Three of the deceased were identified as Salt Lake City residents: Louis Holian and Stephanie Hopkins, both 26, and Thomas Louis Steinbrecher, 23. The fourth, 29-year-old Sarah Moughamian was from the suburb of Sandy, Utah.

Jill Moughamian told the Deseret News that her

daughter, a market researcher, loved the outdoors and grew up "playing in the mountains and climbing trees" as she kept up with her brothers.

She said her daughter found "the two loves of her life" in Utah — her soulmate, who dug her out of the snow but could not resuscitate her, and the outdoors.

"All of them were beautiful people who love the outdoors," Anthony Nocella, a friend of Holian, told the News. "People in the com-

munity are really missing them." Holian "did whatever he wanted to do. He lived life to the fullest," Nocella said. "He's amazing. Everyone is going to miss him. Everyone is going to miss those four people." They were experienced skiers who were well known in the community, Drew Hardesty with the Utah Avalanche Center told the Tribune. The avalanche danger around Salt Lake was high on Saturday, the center said as it tweeted out a warning hours before the avalanche.

A faint distress call alerted police to the slide shortly before noon on Saturday. The survivors found their four companions and dug them out, but they were already dead, police said.

The avalanche was "incredibly wide," Wilson said, and still-unstable snow conditions kept rescuers from immediately recovering the bodies Saturday. Recovery operations resumed Sunday morning.

Avalanches have also claimed other lives in recent days: a 60-year-old

northwestern Montana man died after being caught in an avalanche while snowmobiling in the Swan Range on Saturday; the bodies of three hikers were found near Anchorage, Alaska, on Thursday. In Colorado, four backcountry skiers died in two separate slides in the last week.

Avalanche forecasters and search-and-rescue groups have been worried for weeks that more people would be venturing into the backcountry to avoid crowds and reservation systems at ski resorts during the coronavirus pandemic. This winter is on track to be deadlier for avalanches than last year's.

Numbers gathered by the Colorado Avalanche Information Center show 21 people have died so far this year in the U.S., 15 of them skiers. There are still more than two months left in the season.

A total of 23 people, including eight skiers, died the previous winter between December and April, the agency found. □

Husband of slain Alabama online model sentenced to prison



This file photo provided by the Shelby County Jail shows William Jeffrey West, husband of slain Alabama online model Kathleen Dawn West, who was sentenced to 16 years in prison for the death of his wife Monday, Feb. 8, 2021.

Associated Press

COLUMBIANA, Ala. (AP) — A former campus police officer convicted of manslaughter in the death of his wife, an adult model who posted racy photos online,

was sentenced to 16 years in prison Monday by a judge who said the man still hadn't taken responsibility for the death.

William Jeffrey West, 47,

will get credit for the three years he has spent in jail since his arrest in the death of Kathleen Dawn West, 42, news outlets reported. He faced a maximum 20

years in prison. Kat West was found dead in January 2018 along the street in front of the couple's suburban home in Calera, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Birmingham. Jeff West killed her with a blow to the head from a liquor bottle, prosecutors contended, but the defense argued she died in an accidental fall after a night of heavy drinking.

Shelby County Circuit Judge Bill Bostick told West, an Army veteran who had worked as a campus officer at Birmingham-Southern College, that he had plenty of opportunities to accept responsibility for his wife's death.

"For your own reasons you don't intend to do that so the jury had to do that for you," he said.

The judge rejected pleas from couple's 15-year-old daughter, Logan West, during the hearing to set her

father free. "He has always been my shield against the world," she told the judge. "Please give me my father back as soon as possible." West's mother, Sue West, and mother-in-law, Nancy Martin, who has publicly supported William West since his arrest, testified on behalf of the man. Martin said the verdict against her son-in-law was a total shock.

"We have lost a daughter. Their daughter does not need to lose a father," Martin said.

Kathleen West publicly posted lingerie photos online and charged viewers to see more revealing images.

The defense told jurors during opening statements that her adult pictures — posted under the name "Kitty Kat West" — did not cause discord between the couple and that her husband assisted her. □

E.U. countries expel Russian diplomats in tit-for-tat

By **FRANK JORDANS and LORNE COOK**

Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany, Poland and Sweden on Monday each declared a Russian diplomat in their country “persona non grata,” retaliating in kind to last week’s decision by Moscow to expel diplomats from the three European Union countries.

Russia had accused diplomats from Sweden, Poland and Germany of attending a rally in support of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny, President Vladimir Putin’s most high-profile political foe.

“We have informed the Russian Ambassador that a person from the Russian embassy is asked to leave Sweden,” Sweden’s Foreign Minister Ann Linde wrote on Twitter. “This is a clear response to the unacceptable decision to expel a Swedish diplomat who was only performing his duties.”

Germany’s foreign ministry said that Russia’s decision to expel the European diplomats “was not justified in any way,” insisting that the German Embassy staffer had been acting within his rights under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations to “inform himself about developments on site.”

The ministry added that the



In this photo released by the Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, right, and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell leave a joint news conference following their talks in Moscow, Russia, Friday, Feb. 5, 2021.
Associated Press

decision was taken in close coordination with Poland, Sweden and the European Union’s diplomatic service. Poland’s foreign ministry tweeted that “in accordance with the principle of reciprocity” it considers “the diplomat working at the Consulate General in Poznan as a persona non grata.”

In a statement, EU lawmakers also appealed to “all EU Member States to show maximum solidarity with Germany, Poland and

Sweden and take all appropriate steps to show the cohesiveness and strength of our Union.”

The parliamentarians called for “a new strategy for the EU’s relations with Russia, centered around support for civil society, which promotes democratic values, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and human rights.”

The tit-for-tat expulsions come as EU officials ponder the future of the 27-nation bloc’s troubled relations

with Russia amid deep concern that their large eastern neighbor sees democracy as a threat and wants to distance itself further from the EU.

Moscow’s decision last Friday was as an extra slap in the face for the Europeans because it came as the bloc’s top diplomat — foreign policy chief Josep Borrell — was meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Borrell said he learned about the expulsions on social media.

“The messages sent by Russian authorities during this visit confirmed that Europe and Russia are drifting apart,” Borrell wrote in a blog on his return to Brussels.

“It seems that Russia is progressively disconnecting itself from Europe and looking at democratic values as an existential threat.”

He said the trip left him “with deep concerns over the perspectives of development of Russian society and Russia’s geostrategic choices,” and the expulsions, which he requested be dropped, “indicate that the Russian authorities did not want to seize this opportunity to have a more constructive dialogue.”

Some EU lawmakers criticized Borrell for going, or for not insisting on visiting Navalny, who was arrested in January when he returned to Moscow after spending months in Germany recovering from a poisoning in Russia with what experts say was the Soviet-era nerve agent Novichok.

Borrell tried to arrange a prison meeting through Lavrov, but was told to take it up with the courts.

“If you are familiar with the court procedures in Russia, you will know that it would take much more time than the duration of the visit,” Borrell’s spokesman, Peter Stano, said Monday. □

Dutch will extend coronavirus curfew until March 3



Snow covers a houseboat in Amsterdam, as snow and strong winds blanketed much of the Netherlands, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021.

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The Dutch government announced Monday it is extending the country’s curfew until March 3, declaring that was necessary to slow the spread of the more infectious coronavirus variant first detected in Britain.

The curfew was to have expired Wednesday.

Justice Minister Ferd Grapperhaus said the decision was made after a team of experts that advises the government “urgently warned” ministers at a meeting Monday about the more infections variant.

The country’s 9 p.m.-to-4:30 a.m. curfew was introduced Jan. 23 and triggered days of riots in towns and cities across the Netherlands.

However, the unrest has since subsided and the vast majority of residents adhere

to the curfew.

The 7-day rolling average of daily new cases in Netherlands declined over the past two weeks, from 30.68 new cases per 100,000 people on Jan. 24 to 23.05 new cases per 100,000 on Feb. 7.

However, the country’s public health institute has repeatedly warned that the more infectious variant is spreading more rapidly and will lead to an increase in infections and hospitalizations.

Last week, Prime Minister Mark Rutte extended most of the country’s tough lockdown measures, already in force since mid-December, until March 2.

Rutte said last week that infections are “slowly but surely” declining, but went on to warn that “all calculations point to a third wave that seems inevitably to be bearing down on us, the main cause of which is the British variant.” □

Wife: No signs of torture on body of slain Hezbollah critic

By SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — An independent autopsy revealed no signs of torture on the body of a well-known Lebanese publisher and vocal critic of the Shiite militant Hezbollah group shot dead in his car last week, his wife said Monday.

Lokman Slim, a 58-year-old political activist and commentator, was found dead with six bullets in his body Thursday on a deserted rural road in the country's south. He was visiting friends there and was due back in Beirut late Wednesday when his family reported him missing.

Slim's family has expressed skepticism that a national investigation would lead to those who killed him, citing a history of unresolved assassinations and political crimes in Lebanon. They hired a private forensic pathologist to carry out their own examination of Slim's body. Monika Borgmann, Slim's German wife who also has Lebanese citizenship, said a private autopsy was necessary to get all the needed information.

There was speculation in



German Monika Borgmann, wife of Lokman Slim, a well-known Lebanese publisher and vocal critic of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite Muslim political party, which has an armed wing of the same name, who was killed Thursday, speaks during an interview at her house in the southern Beirut suburb of Dahiyeh, Lebanon, Monday, Feb. 8, 2021.

Arab media that Slim may have been tortured before he was shot. The circumstances of his killing remain unclear and Borgmann said a full autopsy report wasn't yet ready.

Borgmann has called for an international investigation, saying she has suspicions but no proof that his killers were members or support-

ers of Hezbollah.

"It is very clear who his enemies are," Borgmann told The Associated Press in an interview Monday. "It is mainly Hezbollah but for me it is not enough to say we know his enemies and that is it."

"I really want to find out. I want to know why. I want to know who and I want an

international investigation," she said.

Borgmann said she is discussing with lawyers and friends ways to push for an international investigation, joining other Lebanese calling for similar investigations into other unsolved crimes. As a German citizen, she said, she is also looking into whether she can launch an

investigation in Germany. Hezbollah condemned Slim's killing, calling for a swift investigation and urging security agencies to combat crimes it said have spread around Lebanon. Hezbollah said such assassinations have been "exploited politically and by the media at the expense of security and domestic stability" — a jab at their accusers.

Perpetrators of political violence or corruption are almost never identified or prosecuted in Lebanon.

An investigation into a massive explosion in Beirut port last August has barely gotten off the ground and was stalled because of political pushback from powerful officials who were charged with negligence. This has also raised calls for an international probe into the explosion that killed 211 people.

"No local investigation has brought any justice," Borgmann said. "This cold-blooded murder will not pass like this. I will do whatever I can." Slim's killing led to international condemnation and calls for a swift investigation. □

Australia demands Myanmar release detained Australian

By ROD MCGUIRK
Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia has demanded Myanmar immediately release an Australian adviser to Aung San Suu Kyi's government who was detained in a military coup, an official said on Monday. Economic policy adviser Sean Turnell had told friends via social media that he was detained. He has been out of contact in recent days.

"We have called for the immediate release of Australian citizen Prof. Sean Turnell from detention," Foreign Minister Marise Payne said.

The Australian Embassy in Myanmar had been providing Turnell with "extensive support during this ordeal," she said.

Senator Payne declined to speculate on potential sanctions that could be placed on Myanmar, but said Australia's military ties with the country were under review.

Australia has a defense training program with Myanmar worth about 1.5 million Australian dollars (\$1.2 million) over five years.

U.S. President Joe Biden agreed with Prime Minister Scott Morrison during a telephone conversation last week to work together to "hold to account those responsible for the coup," the White House said.

Turnell's friend and fellow Myanmar expert Monique Skidmore said she believed the Macquarie University economics professor had been detained because

of his close relationships with ousted leader Suu Kyi and other senior members of her National League for Democracy party.

"I think it's just his closeness that's got him detained," Skidmore said.

Skidmore expected Turnell would be deported and remained "terribly worried" for his safety while he remained in the country.

Australian diplomats had planned to get Turnell out of the country and he had been waiting for a car to take him to the Yangon airport when the military arrived to collect him from the city's Chatrium Hotel, his friend and fellow Australian economist Tim Harcourt said.

Turnell had arrived in Myanmar from Australia less than a month ago and

had been staying at the hotel. He permanent residence was in the capital Naypyitaw.

Turnell had been held in the hotel and in a police station, Skidmore said.

Turnell Tweeted last week

after the coup began and before he was detained that he was "safe for now but heartbroken for what all this means for the people of Myanmar."

"They deserve so much better," he added. □



In this July 28, 2020, file photo, Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne speaks a news conference at the State Department in Washington.

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EXPLAINER: Why Haiti's political strife has worsened

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— Political strife in Haiti has deepened as opposition leaders and supporters claim that President Jovenel Moïse's five-year term has expired, demanding that he step down on Feb. 7. But on that day, Moïse announced that authorities had arrested 23 people accused of plotting an alleged coup to kill him and overthrow his government, including a high-ranking police official and a Supreme Court judge favored by the opposition. Hours after the arrests, the opposition nominated a supposed transitional president that no one has recognized.

The AP explains what is driving the protests and what



A police officer fires his weapon to disperse demonstrators during a protest to demand the resignation of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021.

Associated Press

the ongoing demonstrations and alleged coup conspiracy mean for Haiti.

WHO IS PROTESTING AND WHY?

Opposition leaders from various political parties organized protests in the weeks leading up to Feb. 7, the day they allege that Moïse's term ended. Hundreds of supporters marched in the streets, often clashing with police as they clamored that Moïse step down. Haiti's Constitution allows presidents to serve a five-year term, and opponents argue that Moïse already reached that limit. Moïse won after former president Michel Martelly's term expired in 2016, receiving more than 50% of the vote but with only a 21% voter turnout in a country of more than 11 million people. □

Mexico's president returns after catching coronavirus

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador returned to his daily morning news conferences Monday following a two-week absence after catching coronavirus, but vowed

not to wear a mask or require Mexicans to use them. "There is no authoritarianism in Mexico ... everything is voluntary, liberty is the most important thing," López Obrador said. "It is each person's

own decision."

López Obrador revealed he received experimental treatments, which he described only as an "antiviral" medication and an anti-inflammatory drug.

The president also revealed that he twice tested negative in late January in rapid tests that are widely used in Mexico, before a more thorough test — apparently PCR — came back positive the same day. "I came through well, healthy," López Obrador said, noting he had been doing breathing exercises as well. "We are back on our feet again, in fighting style."

Many residents of Mexico City have been unable to find beds at Mexico City's overcrowded hospitals, and have been forced to treat sick relatives at home. □



Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador gives his daily morning press conference following a two-week absence after he tested positive for coronavirus, at the presidential palace, Palacio Nacional, in Mexico City, Monday, Feb. 8, 2021.

Associated Press



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PALM BEACH — Love and a pandemic seem almost contradictory. Now more than ever it is important to show and share the love. This year's Valentine's Day has a special meaning therefore it is vital to choose the right location where everything falls into place. Sea Breeze restaurant & bar at the Holiday Inn Aruba Resort has you covered. Indulge in their LOVEly Valentine setting right on the fabulous, sandy-white Palm Beach and enter the world of culinary love.

Sea Breeze restaurant & bar has just been renovated and impresses with a classic yet relaxed tropical look connecting the island feel to an elevated culinary art. Imagine your toes in the sand, candlelight and stars brighten your night and you're enjoying this romantic moment with your beloved while gazing into the Caribbean Sea.

Aruban Aldwin Donata is the executive sous chef in charge of the daily Food & Beverage operations, he is something else. Donata does things differently; he prepares the meals to the fullest flavors and overwhelms you with its presentation. The Valentine menu stands out and combined with the 'on the beach' setting you will find yourself in nirvana.

"I put love in everything I do"

The presentation of the menu is a jewel for the eye, colors pop, especially red being the color of amor. The theme is all around/about the sea, island life, vacationing and sharing love. "I love to work with textures and flavors, together with my right hand, Itala, and the rest of the team we are keen on having all perfect. I put love in everything I do. We need to differentiate ourselves from the rest and so we do," says Donata.

Sea Breeze's Valentine menu was created after a lot of online research and reading books. "I dive into information about the trends for 2021, and I read certain books to get inspired. Basically, I choose a direction I go into and start drawing my first culinary draft. From there we fill in more and more details."

Tantalizing taste buds

Sea Breeze's 5-course Valentine menu starts off with a promising amuse-bouche of Parmesan panna cotta, sundried tomato relish, black olive puree, pickled asparagus, basil oil, followed by the appetizer offering Lump crab croquettes, spicy mustard aioli, and mango with raspberry emulsion. An amazing Salad of Arugula, gorgonzola mousse, walnut crisps, pistachio, dried figs, radish, prosciutto and cherry brandy vinaigrette leads you to the entrée where a Grilled Fillet of beef & jumbo shrimps, celery root puree, asparagus, smoked corn & pepper relish, Worcestershire & aged balsamic reduction, carrot foam await you. The dessert, Chocolate Dome Surprise, is exquisite and the cherry on the pie on this night to remember. This tempting dinner is on Sunday, February 14th, 2021 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Holiday Inn Resort Aruba: Sea Breeze blows you away this Valentine's



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Outcome Corruption Survey 2020

Perception of widespread and increasing corruption

ORANJESTAD — The Centrale Bank van Aruba (CBA) today publishes its Report Corruption Survey (RCS) 2020. The survey results show that a majority of respondents, reaching 94 percent in 2020 from 81 percent in 2019 and 76 percent in 2018, thought that corruption was widespread and increasing. On a positive note, on average 95 percent of respondents considered several corruption acts unacceptable.

Almost half of respondents concurred that the most effective

thing that ordinary people can do to fight corruption is to report corruption, while they perceived that enacting a whistleblowing policy within the public sector was the most important anti-corruption measure that the government could take. The Public Prosecutor's Office and the Bureau Integrity Aruba were seen as the two top organizations that should lead in fighting corruption.

The 2020 RCS, which can be downloaded from CBA's website, pres-

ents the key findings of the Corruption Survey 2020. It highlights the perception of residents on the level of corruption, experiences with corruption when using services particularly in the public sector, and the need for additional anti-corruption measures.

Curbing corruption in Aruba is a high priority for the CBA, because corruption has far reaching negative economic and social repercussions. Several international organizations, such as Transparency

International, frequently execute surveys on the level of corruption in many countries. To compensate for the fact that Aruba is not part of these international surveys, and consequently important data on local corruption are not available, the CBA has been conducting the corruption survey since 2018.

The report corruption survey 2020 is available on the CBA's website www.cbaruba.org. You can also find outcomes of earlier surveys on corruption here as well. □

DCNA Concludes Management Success Project for Dutch Caribbean Protected Areas

KRALENDIJK, BONAIRE — In December 2020 the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA), through its contractors Nature2 and Coastal Zone Management, concluded the Management Effectiveness Project for all of the Protected Area Management Organizations in the Dutch Caribbean. The project, which was restarted after a two-year hiatus, tracks the effectiveness of the management actions implemented by Protected Area Management Organizations in the Dutch Caribbean.

A critical component of effective adaptive management and fundraising is the ability to demonstrate success and progress. For this reason, DCNA has developed a detailed data collection and analysis system, based on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature



Coral reef- © Naturepics: Y.+T. Kühnast (all credits reserved)

(IUCN) 'management effectiveness framework'. This system not only captures baseline data but also acts as a tool for analysing the conservation success, institutional progress and management effective-

ness at each of the protected area sites. As the project continues, valuable time series data are obtained every year as the capture sheets used to gain the information are updated.

This time series information will reflect changes in the priorities of the park management organizations as the time distribution between core management tasks changes as well as the emphasis on different

projects and research being carried out.

The ability of the nature organizations to deal with the pressures they face comes down to their management capacity.

The management success reports outline the context within which management is taking place, the elements of the management capacities of the organization's and the management activities carried out. The information contained within this document could be used by interested parties to raise awareness about the management activities taking place within the DCNA and the local, regional and international significance of the protected areas.

Protected Area Management Organizations also use the reports to form a part of their technical reports. The aim is to make this an annual exercise. □



Article by Etnia Nativa

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Black witch moth

Episode XCI - 91

ORANJESTAD — The black witch moth is a fantastic animal that flaps its wing just like some bats do. And since it has a wing span of circa 18cm and being mostly a nocturnal creature, people mistakenly associate them with bats. Moths and butterflies symbolize hope, transformation, and new beginnings.

However when I had one black moth landing on me, those who were with me made me very curious regarding their reaction and what it meant for them since they panicked in terror. This because of what they have been taught through folk stories by their elders. However, reality is that the black witch moth is a completely harmless animal.

An encounter with a black moth can indicate that the person is about to be reborn or renewed in some way. Sometimes there is darkness before the dawn. Black moths are also symbolizing longevity for some cultures. Moths and Butterflies are recognized as a symbol of transformation. The word transform is metamorphoeo in Greek, from which we get the English term metamorphosis. It describes the type of change a caterpillar undergoes to get its wings to fly. This process is comparable or similar to how a human being becomes a spirit in the afterlife.

Ancient Greeks believed to be the essence of a person itself. The Greeks usually portray Psyche, their goddess of the soul, with wings.

Through the years, the meaning of the moth and the butterfly became varied, depending on their colors. In the Philippines, China and Central America varieties of dark moths and butterflies are associated with death. The Philippine culture has many superstitious beliefs or "pamahiin" and among the most enduring of these is the belief that this animal is a sign of a dead relatives making their presence felt. In Ireland, black butterflies symbolize a restless soul of



a deceased person unable to move on. Meanwhile, white butterflies portray the soul of a deceased child. In Japan, white butterflies also represent the soul of a deceased person. In Germany, butterflies are believed to be the soul of a

deceased child as well.

Mexican folk stories tell us about "la mariposa de la muerte" (butterfly of death). The story tells that if a person is sick and this moth fly's into his house the sick person will die.

For the Aruban a black moth or butterfly is a bad omen. Moreover, if you cross paths with a black butterfly, you should prepare for a negative turn of events for many. Although this common superstition in particular has been around for many years since we can find its origins in native Aruban myths and folk stories, the true is that the fluttering of its fragile wings should make us take note of what is happening around us: they are heralds and also victims of over development and climate change.□



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Lobster biz braces for Chinese New Year impacted by pandemic

By **PATRICK WHITTLE**

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) —

America's lobster exporters recovered from the Trump-era trade war with China to have a good 2020. But the industry is approaching one of the most critical times of the year with trepidation because of the coronavirus.

Chinese New Year is typically one of the busiest parts of the calendar for America's lobster shippers, who send millions of dollars worth of the crustaceans to China every year. This year the holiday is Feb. 12, and industry members said the Year of the Ox won't necessarily be the Year of the Lobster.

That's because shipping is complicated this winter by the threat of the virus. Mike Marceau, vice president of The Lobster Company in Arundel, Maine, said he isn't expecting many exports. Business would normally be booming right now, and it has ground to a halt, Marceau said. It's disappointing because the last spring and summer were fairly strong, he said. "It started in spring, and it



In this Sept. 11, 2018, file photo, lobsters are packed at a shipping facility in Arundel, Maine.

Associated Press

held right up until a couple weeks ago," Marceau said. "We sold a lot of product. We've just lost getting a Chinese New Year because of COVID."

Lobster exports to China have been strained in the U.S. for a couple of years because of instability brought to the business by former President Donald Trump's trade hostilities with the country, which is a huge

buyer of seafood. America sent more than \$140 million in lobsters to China in 2017 and 2018, but exports fell to about \$51 million in 2019 because of heavy tariffs imposed during the trade war.

But now, China is currently enforcing strict rules about food importation because of the coronavirus, said John Sackton, an industry analyst and founder of

SeafoodNews.com. Shipping itself is also more difficult because of the toll of the coronavirus on shipping businesses, he said.

"There are all these logistics things that are throwing sand in the gears of the seafood trade," Sackton said. "The financial risk for the importer has gone up." China's interest in American lobsters has grown exponentially in the last

decade as the country's middle class has grown. Lobster is especially popular around Chinese New Year in China because a cooked lobster is red, a color that represents prosperity.

Chinese New Year is typically a time of heavy travel in China, but that could also be different this year. China is expected to buy fewer lobsters for this year's holiday in part because of government travel restrictions designed to prevent spread of the coronavirus, said Stephanie Nadeau, owner of The Lobster Company. Less travel means fewer celebrations and fewer festive, expensive meals.

China buys the same species of lobster from the U.S. and Canada, which has a large lobster industry in its Maritime provinces. That means competing with Canada for a potentially reduced market this year. Some lobsters that are caught by U.S. lobster fishermen, who are based mostly in New England, are also eventually shipped to Canada for processing and exportation. □

Tesla buys \$1.5B in Bitcoin, will accept as payment soon

By **MATT OTT**

AP Business Writer

SILVER SPRING, Md. (AP) —

Tesla has invested around \$1.5 billion in Bitcoin and said it plans to begin accepting the digital currency as payment for its high-end vehicles soon. The

price of Bitcoin soared 15% to above \$43,000 Monday. The California-based electric car maker headed by Elon Musk revealed the new strategy in a filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, saying its investment in digital

currency and other "alternative reserve assets" may grow.

Bitcoin rose to \$43,863 and briefly hit a new all-time high. Shares of Tesla moved higher as well. In its fourth-quarter earnings report last month Tesla said it had cash and cash equivalents of \$19.4 billion. Dan Ives of Wedbush Securities said the move gives Tesla "more flexibility to further diversify and maximize returns on its cash."

Similar to Tesla, Virginia-based MicroStrategy Inc. announced in August that it would use some of the excess cash on its balance sheet to invest in alternative assets such as bitcoin. The move has paid off so far. As of Feb. 2, the business analytics company said it held 71,079 bitcoins that it purchased for an

aggregate price of \$1.15 billion since last summer. Using the current value of \$43,000, those bitcoins are worth \$3.06 billion.

MicroStrategy shares have risen 660% since the August announcement, but the shares are susceptible to swings in the price of bitcoin. They were up 16% in midday trading Monday after the Tesla announcement.

Palo Alto-based Tesla reported its first annual net profit in 2020, and its stock soared to make it the world's most valuable automaker. Tesla joined the S&P 500 late last year and is currently valued at more than \$820 billion.

It's been a wild ride for Bitcoin since it made its Wall Street debut in December 2017. Major futures exchanges rolled out bitcoin

futures, pushing it to roughly \$19,300, a then-unheard-of price for the currency. It evaporated quickly in 2018, and by December of that year Bitcoin was worth less than \$4,000 a coin.

More recently bitcoin rallied from below \$11,000 in October and crossed \$40,000 for the first time in its history.

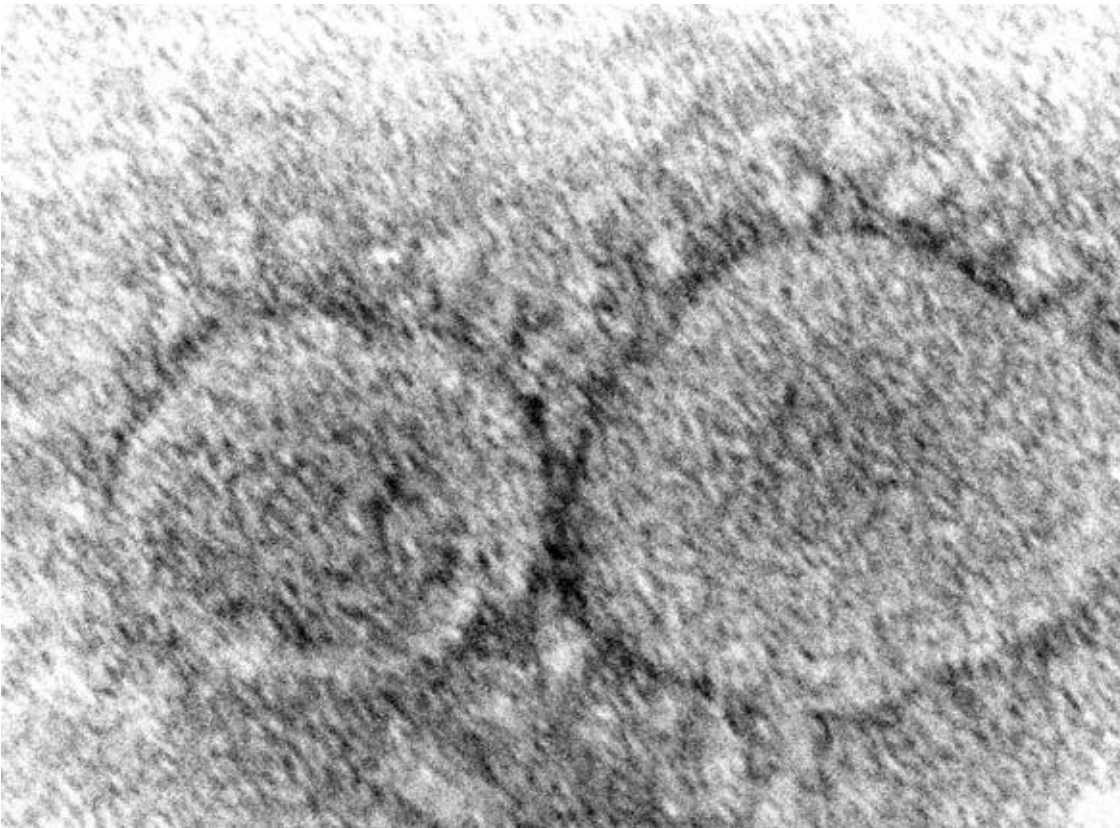
While in the last two years companies have embraced the technology that underlies digital currencies like Bitcoin, a concept known as the blockchain, the actual uses for Bitcoin have not really changed since its rally three years ago. It's still largely used by those distrustful of the banking system, criminals seeking to launder money, and for the most part, as a store of value. □



In this Dec. 1, 2020, file photo, SpaceX owner and Tesla CEO Elon Musk arrives on the red carpet for the Axel Springer media award, in Berlin.

Associated Press

New variants raise worry about COVID-19 virus reinfections



This 2020 electron microscope image made available by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows SARS-CoV-2 virus particles which cause COVID-19.

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE
AP Chief Medical Writer

Evidence is mounting that having COVID-19 may not protect against getting infected again with some of the new variants. People also can get second infections with earlier versions of the coronavirus if they mounted a weak defense the first time, new research suggests.

How long immunity lasts from natural infection is one of the big questions in the pandemic. Scientists still think reinfections are fairly rare and usually less serious than initial ones,

but recent developments around the world have raised concerns.

In South Africa, a vaccine study found new infections with a variant in 2% of people who previously had an earlier version of the virus.

In Brazil, several similar cases were documented with a new variant there. Researchers are exploring whether reinfections help explain a recent surge in the city of Manaus, where three-fourths of residents were thought to have been previously infected.

In the United States, a study found that 10% of Marine

recruits who had evidence of prior infection and repeatedly tested negative before starting basic training were later infected again. That work was done before the new variants began to spread, said one study leader, Dr. Stuart Sealfon of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York.

"Previous infection does not give you a free pass," he said.

"A substantial risk of reinfection remains."

Reinfections pose a public health concern, not just a personal one. Even in cases where reinfection causes no symptoms or just mild ones, people might still spread the virus. That's why health officials are urging vaccination as a longer-term solution and encouraging people to wear masks, keep physical distance and wash their hands frequently.

"It's an incentive to do what we have been saying all along: to vaccinate as many people as we can and to do so as quickly as we can," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious disease expert.

"My looking at the data suggests ... and I want to underline suggests ... the protection induced by a

vaccine may even be a little better" than natural infection, Fauci said.

Doctors in South Africa began to worry when they saw a surge of cases late last year in areas where blood tests suggested many people had already had the virus.

Until recently, all indications were "that previous infection confers protection for at least nine months," so a second wave should have been "relatively subdued," said Dr. Shabir Madhi of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

Scientists discovered a new version of the virus that's more contagious and less susceptible to certain treatments. It now causes more than 90% of new cases in South Africa and has spread to 40 countries including the United States.

Madhi led a study testing Novavax's vaccine and found it less effective against the new variant. The study also revealed that infections with the new variant were just as common among people who had COVID-19 as those who had not.

"What this basically tells us, unfortunately, is that past infection with early variants of the virus in South Africa does not protect" against the new one, he said.

In Brazil, a spike in hospitalizations in Manaus in January caused similar worry and revealed a new variant that's also more contagious and less vulnerable to some treatments.

"Reinfection could be one of the drivers of these cases," said Dr. Ester Sabino of the University of Sao Paulo. She wrote an article in the journal Lancet on possible explanations.

"We have not yet been able to define how frequently this is happening," she said.

California scientists also are investigating whether a recently identified variant may be causing reinfections or a surge of cases there.

"We're looking at that now," seeking blood samples from past cases, said Jasmine Plummer, a re-

searcher at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Dr. Howard Bauchner, editor-in-chief of the Journal of the American Medical Association, said it soon would report on what he called "the Los Angeles variant."

New variants were not responsible for the reinfections seen in the study of Marines — it was done before the mutated viruses emerged, said Sealfon, who led that work with the Naval Medical Research Center.

Other findings from the study were published in the New England Journal of Medicine; the new ones on reinfection are posted on a research website.

The study involved several thousand Marine recruits who tested negative for the virus three times during a two-week supervised military quarantine before starting basic training.

Among the 189 whose blood tests indicated they had been infected in the past, 19 tested positive again during the six weeks of training. That's far less than those without previous infection — "almost half of them became infected at the basic training site," Sealfon said.

The amount and quality of antibodies that previously infected Marines had upon arrival was tied to their risk of getting the virus again. No reinfections caused serious illness, but that does not mean the recruits were not at risk of spreading infection to others, Sealfon said.

"It does look like reinfection is possible. I don't think we fully understand why that is and why immunity has not developed" in those cases, said an immunology expert with no role in the study, E. John Wherry of the University of Pennsylvania.

"Natural infections can leave you with a range of immunity" while vaccines consistently induce high levels of antibodies, Wherry said.

"I am optimistic that our vaccines are doing a little bit better." □

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

	5					6		1
7			8	3			5	
		3			1			8
	1					3		
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4			6			1		
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Writer Mick Herron's 'Slow Horses' are spies for our times

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Like a spy in the night, writer Mick Herron's success has been stealthy. It took a while for the world to catch up with him. A decade after he introduced a crew of flawed secret agents caught between sinister plotters and cynical spymasters in the novel "Slow Horses," Herron is a best-selling, award-winning writer who has been called the heir to master of espionage John le Carré. A seventh novel in his spy series, "Slough House," is out this week, and a TV adaptation is in production with an A-list cast led by Gary Oldman. But initially, few took notice.

New York Philharmonic launches on-demand streaming service

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Philharmonic launched an on-demand video and audio streaming service Monday called NYPhil+ that is available for \$50 annually or \$4.99 monthly. Initial selections include David Lang's "Prisoner of the State" and Julia Wolfe's "Fire in My Mouth," both with music director Jaap van Zweden, and a new concert featuring conductor David Robertson and pianist Emanuel Ax. Selections include five decades of "Live From Lincoln Center" PBS telecasts and Facebook broadcasts. There are no initial selections involving Leonard Bernstein, the Philharmonic's music director from 1958-69. New programs will be added in future months. The Philharmonic stopped large-scale live concerts last March because of the new coronavirus pandemic.



British novelist Mick Herron, the author of the Slough House espionage series, poses for photographs outside his home in Oxford, England, Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2021.

Associated Press

"Maybe it just wasn't the right time," the soft-spoken Herron recalled recently. "There were voices in my publishing company at the time that were saying the politics of the book were pretty ridiculous because it's all about the far right and references to (Britain) possibly leaving the European Union." Herron's original British publisher declined a second book, but Soho Press in the United States stuck by him, and U.K. publisher John Murray later championed the novels. After a decade that saw Brexit roil Britain and populism surge around the globe, Herron's fictional world of damaged secret agents, self-serving politicians and buck-passing bureaucrats seems to capture 21st-century anxieties much as le Carré's morally ambiguous tales caught the spirit of the Cold War. Herron's spies have all been banished from MI5 headquarters to do dull work in a drab London office building — Slough (rhymes with cow) House — for career-wrecking mistakes. This band of "slow horses" is presided over by Jackson Lamb, a flatulent, chain-smoking former field agent who alternates between lethargy, insults and flashes of ruthless brilliance. Herron's spies bicker in the

office kitchen and worry about money — a mundane existence periodically interrupted by traumatic events. It was one such trauma that Herron says "made me want to write about larger events." He was working as a copy editor in London when suicide bombers killed 52 commuters on the city's transit system on July 7, 2005. "I realized that to be involved, in however small a way, in something like that, all you had to do is be a citizen, a member of a city," 58-year-old Herron told The Associated Press from his home in the university city of Oxford. "We're all, I don't want to say combatants, but we're all potential victims. "The idea of a terrorist event as an intrusion on ordinary life, on everyday life, that became something I wanted to write about." At the time Herron was writing a detective series, but found spies better suited his desire for "state of the world" novels. Juliet Grames, Herron's American editor, calls his books "smart, sophisticated takes on real-world problems, but with sly humor that cuts through the darkness." Violence, usually senseless, often erupts in Herron's books, but it's offset by a

large dose of mordant wit. His cleverly plotted page-turners are driven by dialogue that bristles with one-liners. Much of the humor comes from Herron's sharp eye for the way bureaucracies, whether corporate or clandestine, function and malfunction. The world of Slough House is closer to "The Office" than to 007. "I have no experience of the covert world," Herron said. "But I have worked in offices. And I've worked for a company that ended up being part of a much bigger company. And what I've noticed is that the larger an organization gets, the more dysfunctional it becomes. "I wanted to show a world where bad things happen because people make errors. And that's the basis of the series, because all the people in Slough House have made errors of one sort or another. But also it just seems to me it's how the world works." "Slough House" was written before the coronavirus pandemic, but there are plenty of real-world echoes, including references to Brexit and the 2018 nerve-agent poisoning of a former Russian spy in the English city of Salisbury. Then there is the rumpled, unscrupulous, bicycle-riding British politician Peter

Judd, a character Herron insists "was never specifically intended to reflect" Prime Minister Boris Johnson. "He was intended to reflect a particular kind of privileged, self-seeking, self-interested, ambitious, untrustworthy, unprincipled politician," said Herron, who attended Oxford University's Balliol College at the same time as the current prime minister. "I can see why people do relate that to Boris Johnson." Herron's damaged but indomitable secret agents include River Cartwright, grandson of a legendary spymaster; dependable recovering alcoholic Catherine Standish; socially inept computer wizard Roderrick Ho; and Shirley Dander, a dynamo fueled by rage and cocaine. Herron says he is fond of them all, but he has no qualms about killing off long-standing characters. It helps to keep readers on edge. "Some people have assumed that because I created this character who does take joy in trampling all over barriers of political correctness, that I must be like that, too," he said. "I've had emails from people who've written to me in terms that Lamb himself might use, and my jaw drops." Now the slow horses are headed for the screen. Herron was a script consultant on the Apple TV series, which stars Oldman as Lamb and Kristin Scott Thomas as slippery MI5 chief Diana "Lady Di" Taverner. Further cast members are still to be announced, and Herron says "there are some names there which people are going to be very impressed by." □

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Djokovic: “makes my heart full” to see Aussie Open crowd

By JOHN PYE

AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)

— It's been so long since he had a sizeable crowd to play for, the showman in Novak Djokovic just had to come out.

Top-ranked Djokovic began his Australian Open title defense with a clinical, 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 victory over Jeremy Chardy in the closing act of the day 1 program on Rod Laver Arena.

“Makes my heart full to see the crowd in the stadium again,” Djokovic said in post-match interview at the 15,000-seat arena, which was about one-third full. “This is the most people I've seen on the tennis court in 12 months. I really ... I really, really appreciate your support in coming out tonight.” He bristled at the suggestion that he'd been frustrated during quarantine, focusing again on the fans. “I'm just really glad we are free. We're playing tennis,” he said. “I'm really glad we're back in Australia. It's a happy place for us. Happy Slam.”

The total crowd Monday at Melbourne Park was 17,922, including day and night sessions in three zones separated to enhance social-distancing measures. It was well down on the 64,387 fans that crammed onto the grounds on Day 1 of last year's Australian Open, but way more than any other major since then.

After an austere year for tennis during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a unanimous refrain from players across the day, starting with Naomi Osaka in the opening match on Rod Laver, to Serena and Venus Williams, and to mercurial local favorite Nick Kyrgios, who closed the day on the so-called Peoples' court: Thanks for coming.

While Djokovic spoke of his “love affair” with the main show court, where he has won eight Australian titles, Kyrgios was closing the day's program out on the third arena stadium — where polite applause is always secondary to whoops and whistles — with a 6-4,



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates after defeating France's Jeremy Chardy during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Monday, Feb. 8, 2021.

Associated Press

6-4, 6-4 win over Frederico Silva. After his first Grand Slam match in a year, Kyrgios told the crowd “it felt normal, to be honest, you guys were going nuts. It was good to see. Let's hope we can continue it.”

There's no love lost between Djokovic and Kyrgios, who have been trading verbal barbs for months and added to them this week. Day 1 concluded with a look at the future of tennis, and 21-year-old, No. 11-seeded Denis Shapovalov finally beat 19-year-old Jannik Sinner 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 in a marathon lasting almost four hours on Margaret Court Arena. It ended at 12:49 a.m. local time.

Since losing to Rafael Nadal in the quarterfinals of last year's French Open, Sinner has collected his first two ATP titles — the second of those was the Great Ocean Road Open on Sunday.

The state government is allowing up to 30,000 people per day into Melbourne Park, about 50% of capacity. There were no fans allowed at the U.S. Open, only about 1,000 per day were allowed at Roland

Garros and Wimbledon was canceled.

But with the Australian Open starting three weeks later than usual — now it's outside the summer holidays — and some people still nervous about going out in crowds following a harsh Melbourne lockdown last year, it was a predictably cautious start.

That wasn't the case at all for Serena Williams, who arrived ready to race to start her bid for a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam singles title. In a colorful one-legged catsuit she said was inspired by former Olympic champion Florence Griffith Joyner, Williams dropped her opening serve but rebounded to win 10 consecutive games and beat Laura Siegemund 6-1, 6-1.

“Vintage ‘Rena,’” she said of her performance. There were no signs of the right shoulder issue that led her to withdraw from the semifinals of a tuneup tournament last week.

Speed was of the essence also for No. 2-ranked Simona Halep and No. 3 Osaka, who each only dropped three games.

U.S. Open champion Osaka beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 6-2, and two-time major winner Halep had a 6-2, 6-1 win over Australian wild-card entry Lizette Cabrera.

Joining them in the second round were No. 7 Aryna Sabalenka, two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitová, French Open winner Iga Swiatek and 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu, returning from 15 months on the sidelines. Venus Williams, a seven-time major winner, won a Grand Slam match for the first time since 2019.

Playing in her 21st Australian Open, the elder Williams beat Kirsten Flipkens 7-5, 6-2. At 40, Venus is the oldest woman in this year's draw and just the sixth player in her 40s to compete at the Australian Open.

Two weeks in hard lockdown didn't help 2016 Australian Open winner Angelique Kerber, who lost to Bernarda Pera.

U.S. Open champion Dominic Thiem beat Mikhail Kukushkin in three tough sets in his first match at the tournament since losing last

year's final to Djokovic.

Alexander Zverev, who lost the final to Thiem in New York, lost his temper in the second set and belted his racket into the court. Letting off a little steam worked, and he recovered to beat No. 73-ranked Marcos Giron 6-7 (8), 7-6 (4), 6-3, 6-2.

Also advancing were No. 14 Milos Raonic, former champion Stan Wawrinka and Americans Reilly Opelka, Taylor Fritz and Frances Tiafoe, who next plays Djokovic.

Williams' inspiration was clear when she started her match.

Griffith Joyner was a sprinting and fashion icon in the 1980s, setting world records that still stand for the women's 100- and 200-meter sprints. She died in 1998, the same year Serena Williams contested her first Australian Open.

“Yeah, I was inspired by Flo-Jo, who was a wonderful track athlete, amazing athlete when I was growing up,” Williams said. “Well, watching her fashion, just always changing, her outfits were always amazing.”

Bucs hope to keep core together to chase another Super Bowl

By FRED GOODALL

AP Sports Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Tom Brady's coming back. So is Bruce Arians.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers are already thinking about what it'll take to repeat as Super Bowl champions. The challenge begins with trying to keep some key components together for next season.

Brady threw three touchdowns passes on the way to claiming a record seventh NFL title with a 31-9 rout of the Kansas City Chiefs — two to Rob Gronkowski and one to Antonio Brown, both of whom played on one-year deals after being lured to Tampa Bay by the 43-year-old quarterback.

Leonard Fournette ran for the team's other TD. He, too, joined the Bucs on a one-year contract after Brady reached out to the talented running back after he was released by the Jacksonville Jaguars late in training camp.

If Brady, Arians and general manager Jason Licht have their way, Gronkowski, Brown and Fournette won't wind up being one-season rentals.

The team is also interested in signing linebacker Shaquil Barrett and receiver Chris Godwin to long-term deals. Defensive starters Lavonte David, Jason Pierre-Paul and Ndamukong Suh can become free agents, although there's been no indication any is



Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady (12) celebrates during the second half of the NFL Super Bowl 55 football game against the Kansas City Chiefs Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021, in Tampa, Fla.
Associated Press

eager to leave.

"I'm very very confident," Arians said Monday of keeping the bulk of the roster together for next season. "I have all the trust in the world in Jason and what he will do. There will be dollars involved, but I think this group is so so close that sometimes dollars don't matter. But we're going to do everything we can to get the dollars right, too."

The Bucs likely have about \$38 million in salary cap space, though the 2021 cap number has not been set yet.

Arians also expressed the belief that the Bucs, who rode Brady and a dynamic

young defense on an impressive playoff surge that culminated with Tampa Bay becoming the first team to appear in a Super Bowl in its own stadium, can be even better next year. He and Brady reiterated how difficult it was to navigate this season, the quarterback's first in Tampa Bay after 20 years in New England, amid COVID-19 protocols that eliminated offseason workouts and preseason games.

"Hopefully we can keep the band together, have an offseason and actually know what we're doing (entering next season)," Arians said. "I think the sky's the limit for this group."

Brady, who won his fifth Super Bowl MVP award, was asked Sunday night and again Monday where his first title with Tampa Bay ranks with the six he won with the Patriots. He said every season is different and poses different challenges, though he finally conceded there was something special about what the Bucs were able to accomplish playing through a pandemic.

"It's great. That's where I rank it. It's been a great year, incredibly fun. I think in a unique way it was kind of like, with the coronavirus situation and all the protocols, it really was like football for junkies. There

was not really a lot of other things to do other than show up to work and play football," Brady said.

"If you love football this was the year to be a player in the NFL because that's all it was," Brady added. "It was football camp with all your buddies year round. I really enjoyed that part."

Arians, 68, came out of retirement two years ago, inheriting a team that hadn't made the playoffs in more than a decade. The Bucs went 7-9 in his first season, then hit the jackpot in free agency when Brady decided to leave New England. Life hasn't been the same since.

"This was a very talented football team last year, but we really didn't know how to win. And when you bring a winner in, and he's running the ship, it makes a total difference in your locker room and every time we step on the field," Arians said.

"I think the leadership that Tom brings and his attitude of let's go play, it's never over till it's over and we're going to win this thing somehow, some way, it permeated the locker room," the coach added. "His belief that we're going to do this, and knowing he had been there and done it, our guys believed it. It changed our entire football team."

Brady said Arians, who also has two Super Bowl rings as an assistant coach, deserves credit, too. □

Opening races at ski worlds postponed due to snowstorm



A snowcat works on the course after a women's alpine combined race was canceled due to heavy snowfall, at the alpine ski World Championships in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, Monday, Feb. 8, 2021.

Associated Press

By ANDREW DAMPF

AP Sports Writer

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy (AP) — No fans. And two races postponed.

The women's combined that was slated to open the Alpine skiing world championships on Monday was postponed due to heavy snowfall. Then organizers also pushed back the men's super-G from Tuesday to Thursday to allow more time to clear the course. It's a rough start for an event that was already deprived of fans due to a nationwide ban on specta-

tors at sports competitions in Italy amid the coronavirus pandemic.

A meter (3 feet) of snow has fallen since Sunday, and more was coming down on Monday afternoon, making it nearly impossible to create a hard and reliable racing surface.

"I'm anxiously awaiting Thursday so I can see my mountains and show how beautiful they are," said Alberto Ghezze, who is in charge of the courses for the organizing committee. The start of the worlds has been moved to Tuesday

with the women's super-G, while the women's combined was rescheduled for next Monday — which was a reserve day.

There are separate speed courses for men and women and snow removal began earlier on the women's course. Aware of the forecast, organizers had already swapped the two portions of the combined, putting the slalom first and running the super-G as the second leg. The winner of the event is determined by adding together the skiers' times from the two runs. □